

This week we will be celebrating the time of Thanksgiving. Many folks have had very challenging times over this past year and may even find it difficult to find reasons to be thankful. While our economy has struggled and more folks have found themselves unemployed there are things to be thankful for no matter how small. It was Charles Dickens that said "Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has many - not your past misfortunes, of which all men have some."

We live in a land where brave men and women volunteer to go in harm's way to protect and defend this nation. Some give all and all give some for the preservation of the freedoms and liberties we hold sacred. The families of our servicemen and women also sacrifice in giving up the time they would normally have together when their loved ones are overseas defending freedom. Let us all take time to give thanks to our men and women in uniform and their families for the gift of service and sacrifice they give to this nation.

While we live in a land of plenty there are unfortunately many folks that go to bed hungry each night. In these difficult times there are more folks than ever who need our help in finding shelter and food. Let us show our thanks by committing to help others in the year to come. Food banks are short of the food they need to meet the needs of folks that come seeking their help. Shelters do not have the room to accommodate all of those looking for a roof over their heads in their time of need. Our communities do a fantastic job in trying to meet the needs of others but they will fall short if we fail to rally for their call for help.

There are countless volunteers in our communities who run fire and rescue calls to help those in their time of greatest need. These fine men and women also put themselves in harms way and give of themselves 24 hours a day and 7 days to week to help. Let us give thanks for their contributions to making our communities better and safer places to live, work and play.

We can make Thanksgiving a time of year to be truly thankful. When you talk with your friends, families and neighbors let them know why you are thankful and how they can do the same to others. Tell everyone you know that we are blessed in so many ways by the gifts given to us by others and how they lift us up in many ways that we may never realize. Whether it is those who serve this nation in uniform, those who help others in need, those who protect us and answer

our calls for help we should always be thankful and express our thanks in our words and actions. Happy Thanksgiving!

*Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He was elected to his first full term in November 2008 and serves on the Natural Resources Committee and the Armed Services Committee where he is the Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.*